

Platform of Rail Infrastructure Managers in Europe (PRIME)

Mr. Alain Quinet – Industry co-chair

Mr. Olivier Onidi – European Commission co-chair

Bruxelles, 6th April 2016

Language requirements on cross border sections

Dear Mr. Quinet,
dear Mr. Onidi,

As representatives of Railway Undertakings operating international freight trains, we are addressing this letter to the Infrastructure Managers in Europe to ask for a coordinated approach on solving an urgent question regarding the operation on cross-border sections.

In December 2015, the Annex VI of the Directive 2007/59/EC (“Train Drivers Directive”) was amended. From 1st July 2016 onwards, Infrastructure Managers may grant derogations to Railway Undertakings operating on cross-border sections. Train drivers must be able to communicate in one language according to level B1, and they must have an appropriate knowledge of the relevant second language. Similar solutions have been in place since the 19th century, when international rail links in Europe were established and the first bilateral agreements specifying inter alia language requirements for cross-border sections were completed.

These existing solutions – as a code of practice – are safeguarding smooth operation of international freight and passenger trains on virtually all TEN-T core network corridors as well as on cross-border secondary lines. From a Railway Undertaking’s perspective, we are expecting that the Infrastructure Managers in Europe will be using the leeway given by the amended Train Driver Directive wherever feasible, taking into account the proven solutions currently applied at the different cross-border sections.

Given the challenging timeline of the amended directive – it will enter into force on 1st July 2016 – we must tackle this issue in the coming weeks. We urgently need to transfer already existing solutions on a fast lane process into the necessary derogations. Furthermore, we have to find a common understanding for granting new derogations. We have a clear preference for solutions jointly developed by neighbouring Infrastructure Managers and all concerned Railway Undertakings resulting in positive effects for railway safety and costs.

As quite a few questions are still open after the recent amendment to the Train Drivers Directive, we would like to propose to approach jointly the European Railway Agency to develop an application guide fostering the implementation of the new provision. We seek your direct support in helping us keep our costs down in order to maintain and increase rail traffic and safety levels. We would like to discuss this option further with you and propose a discussion with some PRIME representatives at your earliest convenience and in any case during the next RU plenary on 10th May 2016.

Yours sincerely

Reinhard Bamberger
Chair of CEO Task Force

Irmtraut Tonndorf
President of ERFA